

# NATHANIEL COLE PARK

## NATURE TRAIL GUIDE



Nathaniel Cole was a Revolutionary War veteran who settled with his family in 1795 in an area that eventually came to be called Cole's Hill. Together with his son, Nathaniel Cole, Jr., he built a tavern on the corner of what is now Farm-to-Market Road and Watrous Road. The tavern was in operation as early as 1800 and became a stopping place for the stage coach enroute from Binghamton to Albany.

Part of the land once owned by Nathaniel Cole now comprises the Broome County Park by that name.

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### WHERE IS COLE PARK?

Nathaniel Cole Park is located in the Town of Colesville, NY. Take I-81 to Exit 3. Turn left and follow Colesville Road for approximately 6 miles. For more information, call Broome County Parks and Recreation at (607) 778-2193, or Nathaniel Cole Park at (607) 693-1389.

### HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Follow the numbered trail markers. They correspond to the numbered paragraphs in this guide.

TRAIL LENGTH: 1.25 miles 2.08 kilometers  
WALKING TIME: 45-60 minutes

### HOW YOU CAN HELP

1. Please stay on the trails maintained for your safety.
2. Use litter baskets placed along the trail for your convenience.
3. Report damage to bridges, trails, and trail posts to the Park Manager or Security.
4. Be considerate to other park visitors and wildlife. Walk quietly, and you will see more!
5. Place trail booklets in the trail register at the end of the trail or keep a copy for your own reference.

NOTE: All plants and animals in Broome County Parks are protected by law and should not be removed or harmed in any way.

### FINCH HOLLOW NATURE CENTER

Many of the animals you might catch a glimpse of on the Lakeview Trail are on display at Broome County Parks and Recreation's nature facility, Finch Hollow Nature Center. Located on Oakdale Road in Johnson City, the Nature Center houses a collection of over 300 mounted birds and animals, many by the late Lee J. Loomis, well-known taxidermist. For more information, call (607) 729-4231.

## THE LAKEVIEW TRAIL

The Lakeview Trail provides a beautiful and shady retreat from the hot sun of a summer's day. Beginning below the large playing field, this wooded path winds through a dense hemlock forest before crossing the park's main stream. The trail then angles toward the water's edge and stops at several rest areas where hikers can view the shallow inlet waters. Following the shoreline around the entire far side of the lake, Lakeview Trail offers a beautiful view of the water and of the forest which surrounds the trail. The trail continues at the woodland edge, crossing the dam, then winds toward the main park area.

### 1. A Woodland Stream

This shallow wooded waterway provides water for a variety of creatures, both aquatic and land-dwelling. From the bridge you may see fish, salamanders, or aquatic insects within the stream. At the stream's edge, look for footprints or other signs of wildlife that have visited the stream, perhaps under cover of night.

Springtime may bring higher water levels that erode the banks of the stream and uncover roots of nearby trees. The drier days of summer may reduce the stream almost to a trickle.

### 2. Hemlock Habitat

The evergreen trees you see growing all around you are hemlock trees. The conditions here must be perfect for their growth, providing them with the proper soil and light conditions, moisture, and nutrients. Now that this area is home to so many hemlocks, it might be difficult or impossible for other tree species to become established here. Unless there is a major disturbance of this area, it will likely remain hemlock habitat for years to come. (For more info on hemlocks, refer to #10 and #19 in this Trail Guide.)

### 3. A New Environment

When a dam was built to create the park's 55-acre lake, it also brought this shallow, wooded waterway into existence. This warm, shallow wa-

ter environment invited a new group of plants and animals to move in. From spring into fall you may notice cattails and other aquatic plants emerging from the water as well as lush vegetation growing on the rich flats leading from the trees to the water's edge.

If you scan this area you may see turtles sunning themselves on the roots and stumps, butterflies feeding among the wildflowers, or dragonflies hunting over the water's surface, while under it you may see largemouth bass and sunfish, all of which are drawn to this interesting habitat.

### 4. Black Cherry

The Black Cherry tree is easily recognized by the dark, flaking bark, which resembles "black potato chips." Highly valued for their lumber, very few black cherry trees reach their potential height of 80 feet. Smaller ones, however, can be found growing along country roads in abandoned pastures, and on rocky hillsides. The small, sweet fruit of Black Cherries provides food for many kinds of birds.

### 5. Northern Red Oak

The leaves of this valuable tree species turn brown in the fall and often hang on the tree all winter long. The bark is marked by ridges that run up and down the length of the trunk. Red oaks produce acorns which provide an important source of food for numerous woodland animals. Many oak trees are "planted" each year by Grey squirrels who bury the acorns for winter food; any acorns that are not retrieved and eaten may sprout, and eventually produce a new crop of acorns.

### 6. Goosefoot Maple

These small, thin trees are called Goosefoot Maple because the large, 3-lobed leaves resemble the track of a goose's foot. If you look closely at the smooth, green bark, you'll notice the thin white stripes that give this tree one of its other names, Striped Maple. Further north, moose may be found eating this tree, giving it the third name of Moosewood.

Goosefoot Maple seldom grows taller than 15-20 feet. The tree has no commercial value, but is a preferred deer food.

### 7. Many Uses

If you look around the park from this location, you can see how the park is managed for multiple use and users. The most actively managed portion of the park is on the opposite (north) side of the lake. The beach, boathouse, concession stand, picnic tables, ballfields, playgrounds, pavilions, sidewalks and mowed areas, are also the locations of greatest use.

This (south) side of the lake is managed more to let nature take its course, and is not as heavily used. The trail brings these areas together to offer a wide range of recreational opportunities to all who visit.

### 8. Yellow Birch

Yellow Birch trees can be recognized by the bark, which peels into thin, curly, silvery-yellow strips. When older, the bark becomes ragged and coarse, with irregular scales. Yellow Birch grows in rich, cool, moist and well-drained soil. The strong, close-grained wood makes excellent furniture. Deer, rabbits and grouse feed on Yellow Birch trees.

### 9. What Bent These Trees

These large trees stand out from the others due to their unusual, bent shape. Tree trunks normally grow straight and tall; what caused these to look this way?

Years ago, when these trees were younger and much smaller, they were most likely as straight as any of the surrounding trees. An older nearby tree, perhaps weakened by disease, may have fallen onto the young trees, pushing their trunks out at an angle, like the letter "V". Like other plants, trees are "programmed" to grow upward, toward the light. The growing tips of the young trees would have grown outward, then up and around the fallen tree, leaving the bends and curves you see in these trunks. In time, the larger fallen tree would decompose and disappear from sight, leaving many to question "What bent these trees?"

## 10. The Eastern Hemlock

The Eastern Hemlock is a common evergreen tree widely distributed throughout Broome County. The characteristic short, flat needles are shiny, dark green on top, with two thin white lines on the underside.

Found thriving in cool, moist forests, hemlocks were long ignored for lumber, but their inner bark, rich in tannin, proved to be an important resource to the tanning industry in Canada and the northeastern US. Today hemlock wood is used for coarse construction lumber and wood pulp. Birds and small mammals make use of this tree, seeking shelter within its dense foliage, and food from its tiny cones.

## 11. The Decomposers

As trees die and fall to the forest floor, it is the job of decomposers like bacteria and fungi to break them down and return them to the soil. Living trees absorb nutrients from the soil as they grow; without the decomposers, the nutrients would quickly be depleted from the soil. Decomposers allow the nutrients to return to the soil to be used again.

As you look around in the woods, you'll see fallen trees undergoing decomposition. Fungal spores falling on the wood develop into the characteristic mushroom shape or other shape, depending upon the species of fungus. Chemicals are released, which break down the wood into a liquid form which can be absorbed by the fungus. When the wood has become soft and moist, plants such as mosses and ferns will begin to grow on the wood, encouraging further decomposition. The soft, moist wood becomes a perfect home for many insects as well, speeding up the decay process by burrowing and chewing through the wood.

## 12. A "Scared" Tree?

Why did this tree grow this way, appearing to have jumped up on its roots? This tree most likely began its life as a seed that sprouted on a soft, moist, decomposing log or stump. The tree's roots grew down through the decomposing wood, further breaking down the log or stump. As time went by, the tree's roots became well-established and strong; at the same time, the log or stump below slowly decomposed and disappeared from sight, leaving behind a "scared" tree!

## 13. Rotted Heartwood

How can a tree like this one survive when a sizeable portion of its core seems to have rotted away? Because the center, or "heartwood", of a tree contains no living tissue and serves only to support the tree, the tree can continue to survive. However, a tree which has lost the majority of its heartwood often becomes a victim of strong winds.

Cavities created by rotting heartwood are often enlarged by animals such as raccoons. Higher up in the tree, these hollow nooks may become home to some owls, woodpeckers and flying squirrels, among others.

## 14. The Edge Habitat

Between the dark, moist woods and the sunny, open field habitat, lies the "edge habitat." Not really woods or fields, the edge is home to the small trees, shrubs and a greater variety of plants than either the woods or the field. Because of the richer variety of plants, the edge habitat can often help meet the nesting, feeding needs of many kinds of wildlife. The ruffed grouse, for example, requires both mature woodlands and nearby areas of abundant plants, low shrubs, and small trees.

## 15. The Lake

The focal point or heart of the park is the 55-acre manmade lake. This cool, spring-fed lake has two major components: the warm, shallow portion (see #3) and the larger, deeper main area.

When the lake was formed, a smallmouth bass population was established. The lake's cool water, lake bottom make-up, and food base have led to a healthy, self-sustaining population of smallmouth bass, with a few very impressive individuals caught each year.

The cool waters also make for an enjoyable spot for humans as well. The swimming areas are refreshing and stay relatively clear of algae, even in years of extended warm and dry weather.

## 16. Sugar Maple

The large tree you see nearby is a Sugar Maple. The Sugar Maple, the official state tree of New York, is a popular shade and ornamental tree. The wood is sought for furniture, flooring, and paneling. However, Sugar Maples are perhaps best known

for their sweet sap, which, when boiled, eventually yields maple syrup. The sugars responsible for the sweet sap are made and stored by the tree as a source of energy for the yearly regrowth of leaves in the spring. Though other trees also produce these sugars, the sap of the Sugar Maple contains a higher concentration of sugars than most others.

## 17. Beaver Chews

Look closely at these tree stumps and you'll see the "teeth tracks" of the largest rodent in North America. The long, strong incisor teeth of a beaver make short work of small tree trunks like these. Beavers cut down trees to build their dams and their houses, or "lodges." They may eat the leaves, twigs, or tender bark of the trees they cut down, as well as aquatic plants. Though constant gnawing wears down and shortens the beaver's teeth, rodents are equipped with incisors that constantly grow, making up for the loss and maintaining the length of the teeth.

## 18. Bluebird Habitat

The Eastern Bluebird, the state bird of New York, needs open field areas, preferably with short grasses and a scattering of trees. As a "cavity nester," the Bluebird seeks a tree with a hollow nook in which to hide its nest and eggs, but the tree must be located in the field, not in the woods. The area around you is otherwise suitable for Bluebirds, but may lack the tree cavities they need. Suitably-built Bluebird houses (or "nest boxes") placed in this habitat provide acceptable substitutes for tree cavities and make the area perfect for bluebirds as well as a few other cavity-nesting birds.

## 19. Evergreens

When is a "pine tree" not a pine tree? ...when it's a spruce tree, fir tree, hemlock, or cedar!

Many kinds of needle-leaved, evergreen trees can be found growing in Broome County; some are pines, and some are not. Two evergreen trees are growing here, side-by-side. One is a White Pine, with long, soft needles growing in bundles of five. White pines bear long sticky cones. The short-needled tree is an Eastern Hemlock, which bears tiny cones at the tips of its twigs. Both trees are evergreens, but only one is a pine!

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